



### *U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin and Cory Booker's America's College Promise Act*

Every student in America deserves a fair shot at a higher education and a path to the middle class. A highly educated workforce also helps our nation compete in a global economy. By 2020, an estimated 65 percent of job openings will require postsecondary education or training. At the same time, approximately 100 million adults in America today have no college experience. Students should have the opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—without drowning in student debt.

Nearly a century ago, a movement made high school widely available, which helped lead to rapid growth in the education and skills training of Americans, driving decades of economic growth and prosperity. In his State of the Union address, the President asked Congress to make another bold investment in our nation's students, its workforce and the future of our economy by making two years of community college free. The **America's College Promise Act** does exactly that, by creating a new partnership between the federal government and states and Indian tribes to help them waive tuition at two-year institutions, including community, technical and tribal colleges, as well as creating a new partnership with minority serving institutions to help low-income students enroll and successfully complete a bachelor's degree.

Under the America's College Promise Act, a full-time community college student could save an average of \$3,800 in tuition per year. If all states participated under this program, an estimated 9 million students could benefit. This legislation:

- Creates a new partnership between the federal government and states and Indian tribes to help them waive resident tuition in two years of community and technical college programs for eligible students, while promoting key reforms to accelerate student success;
- Provides a federal match of \$3 for every \$1 invested by the state to waive community college tuition and fees for eligible students before other financial aid is applied;
- Ensures that programs offer academic credits which are fully transferable to four-year institutions in their state, or occupational training that leads to credentials in an in-demand industry;
- Maintains and encourages state funding for higher education; and
- Establishes a new grant program to provide pathways to success at minority serving institutions by helping them cover a significant portion of tuition and fees for the first two years of attendance for low-income students.

Community, technical, and tribal colleges enroll forty percent of all college students today, and offer students lower tuition, open admission policies, and convenient locations. They also offer academic programs and an affordable route to a four-year college degree. Community colleges are uniquely positioned to partner with employers to create tailored training programs to meet economic needs within their communities such as nursing, health information technology, and advanced manufacturing.

Restructuring the community college experience can lead to gains in student enrollment, persistence, and completion transfer, and employment. Community colleges receive the lowest per-student funding of any type of college—and 40 percent less per student than public research institutions. Although community colleges are affordable for many students, the average annual unmet need of a community college student is still more than \$8,000 for a dependent student from the lowest-income quartile, which is more than 40 percent of their family income. As a 'first dollar' program, this support does not impact students' eligibility for other forms of institutional, state and federal financial aid, which can ensure that those most in need can afford the very real and significant costs of education beyond tuition, such as books, housing, transportation and child care.